

advertisements and/or depicted on the package are not Farberware products, the consumer is being misled as to their origin and/or the association between Farberware and the little-know Meyer Prestige brand (p. 4).” He bases this conclusion on five internet survey studies in which respondents are asked a series of questions about advertisements or package depictions. In my opinion both Dr. Maronick’s conclusion and studies are flawed. In this report, I will give my opinion that, in his approach to this case, Dr. Maronick (a) violates two basic principles of marketing knowledge about consumer behavior, (b) designs his studies in a biased way, and (c) reaches a conclusion that is not justified by the research or existing marketing knowledge.

3. My conclusion is that ordinary consumers would not be confused by the presentations of the Farberware and Prestige brands at issue. It is my opinion that the “confusion” that Dr. Maronick finds in his studies is in fact produced by the methodology he employed, most notably the use of leading questions, and would not exist in actuality. Further, as explained below, for consumers to be confused about the difference between two products, they first have to be concerned about the existence of a difference and be thinking about it. Based on my experience and knowledge of marketing, I do not believe that this would be the case with the product presentations at issue.

Flawed Methodology

4. Dr. Maronick’s studies are flawed in the execution of the surveys. One problem is with question wording. In the first study, respondents were asked, “Based on what is said or suggested in the ad, who makes the ‘12 piece set’ shown in the ad? (p. 80). Besides forcing people to make an inference they likely would not have even thought about, the wording “suggested” further invites speculation. It implies that the respondent ought to be able to answer and should have an answer. Also, the phrase “who makes the ‘12 piece set’ implies that there is one maker.

5. Another problem with the surveys is question order. In the first study, respondents are asked “what company is the name ‘Prestige’ associated with? The question wording is again biasing in that Prestige is by definition associated with other things in the ad, especially other product names like Farberware, so it is unclear what the answer means. Beyond this, the question before this asks respondents the same thing with the name AFFINITI. Since AFFINITI is juxtaposed to Farberware, the two are clearly “associated.” Having given the answer Farberware in the prior question creates a bias to give it in the Prestige question following it.

6. The first study finds that “85% of respondents believe that Farberware is the source of the entire 12-piece set” and 78.1% of respondents believe Farberware is the only brand of kitchenware being offered. In my opinion, this finding can best be interpreted as attributable to the type of limited processing (see below) one would expect by consumers. It does not follow that consumers are confused.

7. The other four studies are flawed in the same way. The second study, for example, asked: “Based on what is said or suggested in the ad, what brand or brands of kitchenware (pots and pans, cutlery, kitchen utensils, bakeware) is/are being offered in the ad?” The headline of the ad mentions Farberware and 9 bonus items. The response to the question is thus Farberware for 91.5% of respondents. Then respondents were asked about who makes the “9 bonus item included in the set of cookware.” Having answered Farberware in the previous question no doubt disposed respondents to answer Farberware to this second question. And the wording of the question, referring to “the set of cookware” further suggests that the answer should be one name.

8. Underlying the problems of question wording and question order in the surveys is a more fundamental error in reasoning. Dr. Maronick, incorrectly in my opinion, *assumes* that consumers were confused by the product information at issue and tries to demonstrate this in the surveys. His reasoning is flawed, however. He asks people to make inferences about product origin and association in order to show they cannot or that they make errors. But there is no reason to assume that consumers are making such inferences in the marketplace. By asking respondents questions about origin and association, the methodology forces them to make inferences and thus to appear “confused.” *In fact they are merely guessing because they were asked to guess.* Since the marketer did not intend for consumers to think at such a high level and therefore did not address the answers to these questions in the product presentation, respondents have trouble making the required inferences. The answers to the survey questions reflect forced guessing required to answer the questions rather than consumer confusion in the marketplace (such as asking the consumer to look for a “suggestion”).

Two Basic Marketing Principles

9. Dr. Maronick in effect begins his analysis with the assumption that the product presentations at issue will confuse consumers about the origins of and association between the Farberware and Prestige brands. This assumption runs afoul of two well-known principles of marketing knowledge about consumer behavior.

10. The first principle is that consumers do not necessarily think about products in great depth. Consumers can process product information at a variety of levels. This is often conceived of as a hierarchy - consumer may only pay attention briefly and broadly to the information. Or at a higher level they may learn and be able to recall elements of the information. Or at a still higher level they may think about the information and make inference from it or generate their own original thoughts. While product information could be confusing at

any level, the type of confusion that Dr. Maronick assumes about inferences as to origins and associations of detailed elements of the product information could only occur with very high level consumer thinking. It is my opinion that (a) there is no reason to think that consumers were processing the information at the level of trying to make inferences about the products presented and (b), relatedly and even more importantly, if some consumers were processing the information at this level there is no reason to assume that inferences about the origin and association of the products would be something that they would care about. In other words, consumers would be unlikely to be confused about the product information at issue because they would be unlikely to have tried to make inferences about origin and association. *This underscores my above conclusion that in the surveys, respondents were merely guessing because they were asked to guess about things they would not otherwise have been motivated to think about.*

11. A further point is that even if consumers did try to make inferences about origin and association, they most likely would not have been confused in the sense of making an incorrect inference but more likely would have realized that they could not make an inference based on the information provided. If this were important to the consumer, it might constitute a negative factor in their decision-making, but it would not constitute confusion.

12. A second marketing principle buttresses my opinion that consumers would not have been motivated to try to make inferences about origin and association of products presented and would not have been confused if they did. The principle is that consumers are used to products being bundled together and knowledgeable about this. Consumers see products bundled together in stores, in promotions (e.g. bonus offers), servings (e.g. a Happy Meal) everywhere. They realize that there is not necessarily a connection between the products.

Moreover, they realize that whether it is worth thinking about a connection depends on the nature of the bundle. If the bundle is being marketed with the idea of the products being connected (as with a common origin), then they know to consider this. If the bundle is not being marketed with the idea of the products being connected, the consumer ordinarily would not be motivated to try to make inferences about possible connections. (Or again, if they did, and did not have sufficient information, they would realize this.)

13. Therefore, in my opinion the product presentations at issue are unlikely to have been confusing. Consumers would have had no motivation to try to make inferences about minor products included in the bundles, and as such, they were in all likelihood responding to a suggestion the in the question. Since the products were not being marketed with the message that a common origin or association was important, consumers would not have thought about this and if they did, would have realized that they lacked the information to make an inference.

14. A final point in this regard, it is apparent to me as a marketer that if Meyer's intent was to market the bundled products based on common origin, it would have emphasized this much more in the product information.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Dated: April 27, 2009

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bobby J. Calder", is written above a horizontal line.

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Education

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M.A.	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, January 1970 Major Field: Social Psychology Minor Field: Psychometrics
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Positions

1993	The Charles H. Kellstadt Distinguished Professor of Marketing and Professor of Psychology, Kellogg Graduate School of Management, Northwestern University Professor of Journalism, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University
1986-1993	The A. Montgomery Ward chaired Professor of Marketing and Professor of Psychology, Northwestern University
1978-1986	Professor of Marketing and Professor of Psychology, Northwestern University
1975-	Associate Professor of Marketing and Associate Professor 1978 of Psychology, Northwestern University
1974-	Associate Professor of Marketing and Organizational 1975 Psychology, The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania
1973-1974	Director of Organizational Research, National Analysts, a subsidiary of Booz, Allen & Hamilton, Inc. (on leave, University of Illinois, promoted to Associate Professor with tenure)
1972-1973	Assistant Professor of Business Administration and Psychology
1970-1971	Postdoctoral Fellow, joint appointment in the L.L. Thurstone Psychometric Laboratory and the social psychology program, University of Northern Carolina at Chapel Hill.
1969-1970	U.S. Public Health Service Predoctoral Research Fellow, under the sponsorship of Chester A. Insko and John Thibaut, University of North Carolina.

Professional Affiliations

Association for Consumer Research
American Marketing Association
American Psychological Association

Major Publications

(not including conference proceedings).

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